

Letter to World Citizens

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On Stafford Beer's Contradictions

As World Coordinator of the World Government of World Citizens (WGWC), I am more than mildly interested in the abstract and misleading debate over “governance” versus “government” among respected leaders.

My interest is deepened when a former key player on the WGWC team, Stafford Beer, reverses his publicly stated adhesion by categorically rejecting “world government” in favor of “world governance,” both as a general principle and as his own personal commitment. (See Beer's Open Letter, page 10.)

Is there a genuine difference between the two? And if so, what would impel a switch in one's affiliation?

Beer's extraordinary and public reversal deserves immediate and thorough response, not only for the conceptual theory involved, but for the hundreds of thousands of individuals already willingly affiliated with and represented by *the* World Government, however embryonic and quixotic it may appear to others.

My immense respect for Beer, so brilliant in many fields, as well as my sincere regard for his unwavering loyalty for many years to humanity's safety and well-being, nonetheless does not relieve me from pointing out his ambivalence on the vital subject of “world governance” versus world government. Moreover, the issue, as Frank Bourne showed in his open letter to Beer (WCN, Vol. IX, No. 1), has broadened to include national leaders and intellectuals as well as numerous non-governmental organizations. They likewise reject world government in favor of the ephemeral “world governance.” Beer's open letter states he is not “the slightest bit ambivalent,” as I claimed he was. You will find on page 11 a reprint of some of his former views on world government.

Beer now writes that cybernetic approaches “are based on the machinery of governance found in nature.” The “law of the jungle,” however, is simultaneously one of unbridled savagery between species or even among members of the same species, as well as one of symbiosis, as when small birds clean the teeth of crocodiles.

Beer later refers to the Constitution of the United States as answering “to the cybernetic canon 200 years ago” because “serious ethical thought rather than the instincts of power and greed then held attention.” Yet it is precisely “instincts of power and greed” that dominate the natural world from which the Founders willfully extricated themselves by “ethical thought” translated into positive law.

Later, Beer writes that two amendments included in the Bill of Rights — the First and Fifth — have prevented the U.S. from “blowing itself apart before our eyes.” These two, among the others, define citizens' rights against government encroachment, yet protected by government institutions.

Beer's comprehension of governments, however, seems to be limited to “edicts” which make the natural systems of governance “go hideously wrong the moment ‘government’ interferes.” The social contract of Rousseau has no place in Beer's definition of human

society; neither, alas, does the sheer reasoning power of men/women in social communion.

“If a world government were to turn tyrannical, who would check its excesses?” he asks rhetorically. The question itself arises from a lack of understanding of the principle of unity (or negentropy) underlying all surface activity, human or otherwise, which, in political terms, identifies democracy. When “world” is placed before “government” a moral element is added, both inclusive and universal. “Humanity’s government” expresses the same benevolence. As Professor Ronald Glossop points out (see page one), tyranny is with us here and now in the guise of the exclusionary nation-state system.

A further illustration of Beer’s ambivalence is his extraordinary reference to the U.N., IMF, EEC and Nafta. All these institutions, he says, by cybernetic criteria are designed not-to-work — as if they were governments in themselves. Who knows better than World Citizens that such organs don’t work? It is precisely why we claim a government which bypasses them.

And why, in citing the decimation of plants and animals “by governments,” does Beer then make the preposterous claim that “‘the Government’ is powerless to prevent the abuse of the planet by all these smaller governments”? Is he admitting the existence of World Government but denying its power to stop abuses by nations? The argument is specious. If nations do abuse plants and animals — and we do not deny it — then an overriding sovereign global authority is vitally necessary to protect them...and humanity as well.

Finally, Beer admits that “institutions have to be redesigned, and fast.” But there is a large gap between new (and, I suppose, world) institutions and “world governance.” The bottom-line question for Beer and the entire world of academia is: Who does it?

The only self-evident answer is: “We, the people.”

In my book *Passport to Freedom*, there is a chapter entitled, “What Is World Government?” I hope you read it in the Oct./Nov. 1994 issue of WCN. Here is a relevant quote: “World citizens needed something more than general principles if we were to be taken seriously. We needed a pragmatic, legal basis from which to deal with national bureaucrats. It wasn’t enough to assume World Government; we would have to proclaim it.” This conclusion resulted in the Ellsworth Declaration of September 4, 1953. Similarly, in the April/May 1994 WCN, an article reprinted from the July 1975 issue asked: “Why World Government?” The relevant section here is: “We have committed ourselves to the bold proposition that we are humans first and nationals second. If ‘to secure these rights Governments are instituted among men,’ we have then instituted government where there was no government, in the area both of common concern and individual human rights, the most precious being the right to live.”

When I first met Stafford Beer at the University of Pennsylvania in 1975, I explained to him that our world government was the working “model” based on inalienable human rights that seemed allied to the holistic premise of cybernetics. We — almost three-quarters of a million at the time — were operating, I explained, on the basis of individual sovereignty, the right to choose our own political status or allegiance in order to meet our common problems head-on. The principle operating document was, I added, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He accepted this explanation with delight, and I might add, with immense relief after his catastrophic experience in Salvador’s Allende’s Chile.

But, I asked him, given the World Government's *de facto* existence, how could we evolve a world constitution from the world citizen grassroots? As a systems scientist, he was fascinated with the challenge. At the time there was no debate about "world governance" as opposed to world government. Certainly, he gave no indication he was "against" world government. Quite the contrary. He signed on enthusiastically, finally accepting the position of coordinator of the World Cybernetic Commission... of World Government! He was subsequently issued a World Passport which he boldly displayed at various meetings.

My underlying reason for wanting a cybernetician on the World Government team was not to replace our government with a global system in which the individual would be a mere cog in a complex wheel-within-wheels, but rather to empower the individual sovereign citizen within an already-existing holistic "system" called humanity.

Throughout our collaboration Beer often remarked to me that he had to protect his "credibility" vis-a-vis his scientific colleagues, insinuating that somehow his active adherence to world citizenship and world government would not be considered acceptable in the academic world. I would remind him of Einstein's support for world government, adding that the "credibility" of humanity itself was also at stake in allying itself with a new science whose name, much less its tenets, were known by few people.

During the hectic days before the World Syntegrity Project launch in July 1993, Beer outlined in a memorandum the criticism he faced from scientific colleagues in seeking their support for the project. The critics claimed, according to Beer, that "WGWC, advertised for 40 years, is completely undemocratic, has no actual policy statement, no ministers and therefore no cabinet responsibility, and no instrumentality beyond its register and newsletter. It is, in this objection, in no sense a 'government' but the vehicle for the quixotic activities and opinions of one man. Amplified cybernetically, this looks threatening and dangerous."

Leaving aside the irrelevant criticism of "no ministers" and "cabinet responsibility," these theoretical scientists could not comprehend that the over one million human beings who had opted for a new, global status, were the World Government!

During a meeting with the board of Team Syntegrity in Toronto in regard to the forthcoming World Syntegrity Project, I gleaned my first indication of a possible ambivalence in Beer's attitude. In an unguarded moment, he asserted that "all government is fascistic!" Considering his important consulting work with governments of seventeen countries as well as the United Nations, this statement becomes more or less incomprehensible.

The stateless/refugee population of the world now exceeds 40 million. Moreover, 1.5 billion humans suffer malnutrition and 25,000 children die of starvation every day while nation-states continue arming, some with nuclear weaponry. The reasoning mind cannot cope with such horrendous contradictions.

But that unrepresented population of fellow humans, whether it knows it or not, is represented *only* by the World Government of World Citizens, embryonic as it is today.

I maintain that those who opt for "world governance" instead of world government have no place to go from that intellectually sterile position, no direction for personal action or escape from unreasoned fear, no will or strategy for opposing today's national oppressions, no global community to join, no power to right wrongs or even take a stand for justice, and, most important, no c